

## [Edward T. Pruitt]

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Life History

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. 7. [94?]

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FEC

Edward T. Pruitt, 81, resident Masonic Home for Aged near Ft. Worth, born Feb. 26, 1856, near Mt. Sterling, Ala. A rider at six he became a cowboy on the S&B ranch from 1890 to [?] and later bought a 10 section ranch 2 mi. W. of Post, Tex. Was employed by a Mr. Pruitt (no relation) in 1897 to trail boss a 1600 head herd to Medicine Hat, Canada from Post, Tex.

"I'm just an old man but I've sure minded critters on the ranch and the trail drive. I was born February 26, 1857 on a plantation that my dad was overseer on near Mount Sterling, Choctaw County, Alabama. I Was named Edward Thomas Pruitt. The Thomas was after the fellow's that owned the plantation. His name was Thomas Ridgeway and he let his brother-in-law B. Turner run the place as long as he didn't marry. Youse see his first wife had died and she was Ridgeway's sister. Dad had the overseeing of about 35 niggers for Turner and 35 for Ridgeway who owned three or four plantations around there.

"I got my fust hoss from the Doc that 'tended the niggers while they were on the plantation. It was an old flea bitten grey. I don't guess it had an stock in it. Just an old hoss. Doc gave

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him to me when I wasn't but five years old. I learned to ride on that old hoss before I was six. I'd go around and tend to the different chores left up to me on that hoss. My dad died a couple of years before the war ended so ma lit out with us kids to her mother's. Grandma had about 20 nigger slaves on here place and it was the same as being on the other place 'til freedom come along and upset everybody's apple-cart. Freedom put all us kids to work in the fields along with the niggers that stayed and got pay for their work. We kids worked for nothing after freedom and the niggers got money where they worked for nothing before and we kids got the money. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 "In 1880 we boys were getting pretty good size and taking an interest in how things was being run so ma lights out to San Saba County, Texas, and buys a 320 acre place to build a stock farm. My brother Sam and I had connived around and got us enough money to buy us [about?] 140 head to put on the place. We branded our stock SMP; later on ma got her 40 head and we branded them MAP after her name. We didn't have a speck of trouble while there and made right good. We had to go in debt a little when we first come there but we made enough money to go to Graza county in the Fall of '89 and bought 400 acres of land, about 350 head of cattle, and about 50 head of native hosses. This place was located about 12 mi. from Post City and we run the same brands we run back in San Saba County.

"My cow punching experience didn't amount to nothing until I got ants in my pant to go to work where they had a little excitement every day. I'd got so tired of the [little?] herds that I turned my part over to Sam to manage and went to work for the Scroggins and Brown ranch. It was in Graza county and was run by Pete Scroggins and Bolley Brown. They run a partnership herd of about 750 head with a BS brand, then Pete run about 750 with an IDS brand, and Bolley run about 375 with a block bar brand. You make it with a square and a line running down the middle.

"That was the kind of a berth I'd been looking for. Bolley was the best rider I ever saw and he rode the best cutting hoss in that section of the country. He'd just make old Jerry understand which critter he wanted cut out and let the hoss do the rest. Jerry'd stay with the critter 'til Bolley could loop it. The next best hoss was old Shiloah owned by Pete

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Scroggins. Shiloah was right as good a [?] 3 as Jerry. Bolley actually went to the Fair at Haslett, took the reins off and won a blue ribbon with Jerry in the hoss show.

"I'm kinda old to recall much of the ranch life. I know they was wild tales told by the hundreds until somebody started a crap game or a card game, or put and take. I can't recall a one that had to do with ranch life. We had music and singing too but I don't recall any songs either. About the troubles a puncher could have were stampedes and other things but not much trouble with rustlers. I never saw an Indian on the make out there either. Pete and Bolley had made a rep for taking care of their stock before I came out into that country so folks with a loose loop kinda missed the BS when they made a foray.

"I saved my money on the BS and after 3 1/2 years I met J.M. Ozer in Snyder, Tex.; he was smart and knew how to make money so I quit the BS and we pooled what money we could rake and scrape up. We started a grocery store by the name of J M Ozer & Co., then bought a cotton gin from a fellow who had gone broke before he ginned his first bale. I runs the gin while Ozer runs the store. I ginned the first cotton for Crosby, Lubbock, Graza, and Dickens counties. It was the first gin in that part of the country. After the 35th bale it burned down and I rebuilt it and run it for 7 more years.

"I met L. H. Pruitt who owned about half of Snyder, he was no relation of mine but he and I gee'd together so we became fast friends. It was through him that Ozer and me sold our grocery store and bought a 10 section ranch about two miles west of Post City. We run over 600 head on it with the JMO brand. It was known as the Ozer and Pruitt ranch out there at the time. This Pruitt got the motion in his 4 his head that he wanted to go to Canada. He propositioned me about 50 times to trail boss his herd up there. I turned him down a long time but I took him up in 1897 and he sells everything he had but 1,600 steers. He had to sell his 40 section ranch and 2,400 cattle for almost nothing to get away but he did it. We gets ready to strike the trail up to the Matador Ranch in Motley county., on the old Mackenzie trail on the Red Buck Ranch in Scurry county than stayed on it 'til

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we made the Matador. The railhead came to Estelline which was right at the edge of the Matador and we shipped the cattle from there to Big Sandy, Montana.

"All the way up we had to stop the train every day and water and feed every head. About half way up we let the critters have a two day rest. It wasn't a bad trip though. When we unloaded we strikes for Medicine Lodge, Canada. It was a different kind of country to what the critters was used to so they kept us busy day and night with small stampedes. I was lucky in that I made Pruitt hire nothing but top hands before we started so we was able to run close herd on the critters. These small stampedes kept us so busy that we didn't get much rest. One night I'm standing guard alone and I decided to get down off my hoss. After I got down the hoss shakes his self and the saddle makes a lot of noise. Them critters was off like a shot. Since I was alone it seemed like they'd run two miles before any of the other fellows gets up to me and helps me circle them and start them to milling.

"The next trouble was when we got almost to the Canadian line. About a mile ahead of us on the Milk River was a little settlement right on the line and between two lakes. Pruitt's boy rides ahead and when he comes back he says that we can't go on account of the 5 mosquitoes. I's raised back in Alabama and I'd seen mosquitoes there big enough to carry a dog or cat off so I thought we'd just go ahead and take the mosquitoes as they came. Along 10 o'clock when it was just good dark it seemed like the earth just roes and it was all mosquitoes. I learned something that night, they bit and bit and the cattle got scared and ran. We stayed with them and kept them in line 'til morning when the mosquitoes left us. We speed herded the critters past the spot we had our trouble and crossed into Canada. About dark they came again and the old man's chuck wagon bogged down. He says, "T'hell with it! Let's get out of these varmints!" We leaves the wagon and drives on out of the valley.

"Two miles past [the?] Canadian line a Red Jacket joins us. He's been sent down by his sergeant to keep us from cutting out any critters we didn't want inspected. We'd beat him to the draw because we didn't bring anything but the best of Pruitt's stock so we just

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put him to work as we were short handed and he was a good cowhand. When we got to Medicine Hat the inspector had us string out and he looked the cattle over and counted them; then he ok'd us to pass on.

"When Pruitt got the herd to 20 miles this side of Medicine Lodge he settles and I caught the first train back home. That trip was the one outstanding thing that ever happened to me. After I got back I went out of the cattle business but I always kept good hosses. My first hoss cost me \$40., my chaps cost \$8., my boots cost \$16., and my first big hat cost \$8. Since the time I bought my first hoss I've bought them as high as \$325. for a Percheron in Snyder." 1 Phipps, Woody

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Edw. T. Pruitt, 81, was born on a plantation near Mt. Sterling, Choctaw Co., Ala. Dr. gave him his first horse when he was but five and he was a good rider by the time he was six. His father died in 1868, and the family moved to his grandmother's plantation. They moved to San Saba Co., Tex., in 1881, and established a 320 acre stock farm. They moved to Garza Co., Tex., in 1889, and established a 400 acre stock farm. Pruitt was employed by the S.&B. Ranch in 1890 for 3 1/2 Yrs. He quit to buy a cotton gin and a Gro Store but sold the store later and bought a 10 section ranch located two miles West of Post, in Garza Co., Tex. A Mr. Pruitt of no relation employed him in 1897 to trail boss a 1,600 head herd to Esteline, Tex., where the herd was shipped to Big Sandy, Mont., then driven to Medicine Hat, Canada. He now resides in the Masonic Home for the Aged which is located about 12 Mi. from Ft. Worth, Tex. His story:

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"So you want to know a little about the old cow punchers, do you? Well, I'm just an old man but I guess I can help you for I've sure minded critters on the ranch and the trail drive. I'll begin first on where I was born. It was on February the 26, 1857, on a plantation that my dad was the overseer on. It was located right near Mount Sterling, in Choctaw County, Alabama. I was named Edward Thomas Pruitt. The Thomas was after the fellow's name that owned the plantation. His name was Thomas Ridgeway, and he let his brother in law, B. Turner, run the place as long as he didn't remarry. You see, his first wife had died and she was Ridgeway's sister. He couldn't take it though, because he married after the niggers got free. Dad had the overseeing of about 35 niggers for Turner and 35 for Ridgeway, who owned three or four plantations around there.

"I got my fust hoss from the doc that 'tended to the niggers while they was on the plantation. It was an old flea bitten grey. I don't guess it had any stock to it. Just an old hoss. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 Doc gave him to me when I wasn't but five years old. I learned to ride on that old hoss before I was six years old. I'd go around and tend to the different chores left up to me on that hoss. My dad died a couple of years before the war ended so ma lit out with us kids to her mother's. Grandma had about 20 nigger slaves on her place and it was the same as being on the other place 'til freedom come along and upset everybody's apple-cart.

"Freedom put all us kids to work in the fields along with the niggers that stayed and got pay for their work. Now, that's something. We kids worked for nothing after freedom, and the niggers got money where they worked for nothing before and we kids got the money.

"Well, by 1880, we boys were getting pretty good size and taking an interest in how things was being run so ma lights out to San Saba county, Texas, and buys a 320 acre place to build a stock farm. Now, a stock farm is where you raise stock and farm too. Me and my brother Sam, had connived around and got us enough money to buy us about 140 head

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to put on the place. We branded our stock 'S.M.P.' Later on, ma got her 40 head and we branded them, 'MAP', after her name.

"We didn't have a speck of trouble while there and made right good. We had to go in debt a little when we first come there but we made enough money to go to Garza county in the Fall of '89 and bought 400 acres of land, about 350 head of cattle, and about 50 head of native hosses. This place was located about 12 miles from Post City, and we run the same brands we run back in San Saba county.

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"Now, I'm kinda old to recall much of the ranch life. I know they was wild tales told by the hundreds until somebody started a crap game or a card game, or they kinda liked put and take. I can't recall a one of them that had to do with ranch life. We had music and singing too but I don't recall any songs either. You know, some fellows can remember a joke all of their life but I never could.

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"About the troubles a puncher could have, we had stampedes and other things but not much trouble with rustlers. I never saw an Indian on the make out there either. Pete and Bolley had made a rep for taking care of their stock before I came out into that country so folks with a loose loop kinda missed the BS when they made a foray. 4 "All the time I was on the BS, I saved my money. After I'd been there for three and a half years, I met a fellow in Snyder, Texas, by the name of J.M. Ozer. Now, he was a smart fellow and knew how to make money. I never knew where he came from, nor nobody else knew a thing about him but I wanted to make a little money so I quit the BS and me and him pooled what money we could rake and scrape up. We started a grocery store by the name of J.M. Ozer and company, then bought a cotton gin from a fellow that had gone broke before he'd ginned his first bale. Well, I runs the gin whiel Ozer runs the store. I ginned the first bale of cotton for Crosby, Lubbock, Garza county, Lynn county, and Dickens county. It was the first gin in that part of the country. After the 35th bale, it burned down and I rebuilt it and run it for 7 more years.

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"This fellow Pruitt began to get a notion in his head that he wanted to go to Canada. He propositioned me about 50 times to trail boss his herd up there. Well, I turned him down a long time but I finally took him up in 1897, and he sells everything he had but 1,600 steers. He had to sell his 40 section ranch and 2,400 cattle for almost nothing to get away but he did it. [Then?] we gets ready to strike the trail, we went up to the Matador Ranch in Motley county. We struck the old Mackenzie trail on the Red Buck Ranch in Scurry county, then 5 stayed right on it 'til we made the Matador Ranch. The rail road came to Esteline, Texas,

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which was right on the edge of the Matador ranch, and we shipped the cattle from there to Big Sandy, Montana.

“All the way up, we had to stop the train every day and water and feed every head. About half way up, we let the critters have a two day rest. It wasn't a bad trip, though. When we unloaded, we strikes out for Medicine Lodge, Canada. It was a different kind of country to what the critters was used to so they kept us busy day and night with small stampedes. I was lucky in one thing. I made Pruitt hire nothing but top hands before we started so we was able to run close herd on the critters.

“These small stampedes kept us so busy though, that we didn't get much rest. One night, I'm standing guard alone and I decided to get down off my hoss. After I got down, the hoss shakes his self and the saddle makes a lot of noise. Lawd! Lawd! Them critters was off like a shot. Since I was alone, I had to take out with them and try to mill them as soon as I could. It seemed like they'd run two miles before any of the other fellows gets up to me and helps me circle them and start them to milling. Well, it was a cinch after that.

The next trouble was when we got almost to the Canadian Line. About a mile ahead of us, we was on the Milk River, there was a little settlement right on the line and it was in between two lakes. Pruitt's boy rides ahewad ahead and when he comes back, he says that we can't go on account of mosquitoes. Well, I's raised back in Alabama and I'd seen mosquitoes there that was big enough to carry a dog or cat off, so I thought we'd just go ahead and take the mosquitoes as they came. Well, along about 10 o'clock, when it was just good dark, it seemed 6 like the earth just arose and it was all mosquitoes. Man! Man!, I'd seen a lot of mosquitoes bit I learned something that night. They bit and bit and the cattle got scared and run. We stayed with them and kept them in line 'til morning, when the mosquitoes left us.

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chuck wagon bogged down. He says, 'T'hell with it! Let's get out of these varmints!' We leaves the wagon and drives on out of the valley. When we got up to where we could get a little wind, we wasn't bothered about mosquitoes.

"About two miles past the Canadian Line, a Red Jacket joins us. He's been sent down by his sergeant to keep us from cutting out any critters we didn't want inspected. Well, we'd beat him to the punch because we didn't bring anything but the best of Pruitt's stock so we just put him to work because we was short handed and he was a good cow hand. When we got to Medicine Hat, the inspector had us string the cattle out and he looked the cattle over and counted them. Then he OK'd us to pass on.

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"About the only other important thing that happened to me was when I married the widow Preston. She and I live here now, at the 7 Masonic Home for Old Masons. I married her in 1912, on March the 31st, in Snyder.

"You know, times have sure changed since I was a youngster. I mean in how people treat each other. When I was a stripling, folks used to go out of their way to treat you nice. Once, when I was making a deal with a fellow at Dickens for some cattle, I got word that my brother Sam, was dieing. Well, This was along about the time when I owned the place near Post. When I got this word, I lights out for home just hard as I could high-tail it. I got lost after dark when I wasn't but a few miles from the BS Ranch. I was in some canyons and couldn't see my way clear. After riding around for several hours, I strikes an old road so I decides to see it out. After awhile, I comes to a fence and I tears it down so I could

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cross it. When I got onto the other side, [?] there was the Post-Snyder road. One of the best traveled roads in that section.

“What worried me though, was the fact that I'd got the word about high noon, and there I was, late and my brother dieing. Well, I makes it to the BS Ranch house, and Mrs. Brown meets me at the door. She'd heard about Sam being sick so she asks me about how he was doing. After I'd told her that I'd got further word that he was dead, she tells me to get a hoss out of the remuda while she gets me a bite to eat. I was soon on my way and I got home at [?], that night.